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THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

BROWNING

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The Last Ride Together.

Now, heaven and She are beyond this ride.
E. S. COBURN
And here we are riding She and I.

"And here we are riding, she and I."

"And here we are riding, she and I."

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

ROBERT BROWNING

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
FREDERICK SIMPSON COBURN

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"And here we are riding, she and I."..... Frontispiece

"And this beside, if you will not blame,
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I said—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for,
fails,
Since this was written and needs
must be —

My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankful-
ness!
Take back the hope you gave, I claim
Only a memory of the same,
–And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride
with me.

"And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me."

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride
demurs
When pity would be softening through
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance:
right!

The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least
not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may
end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western
cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's
at once—
And so, you, looking and loving
best,

Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was
here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—
joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped
scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who
succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on
either side.

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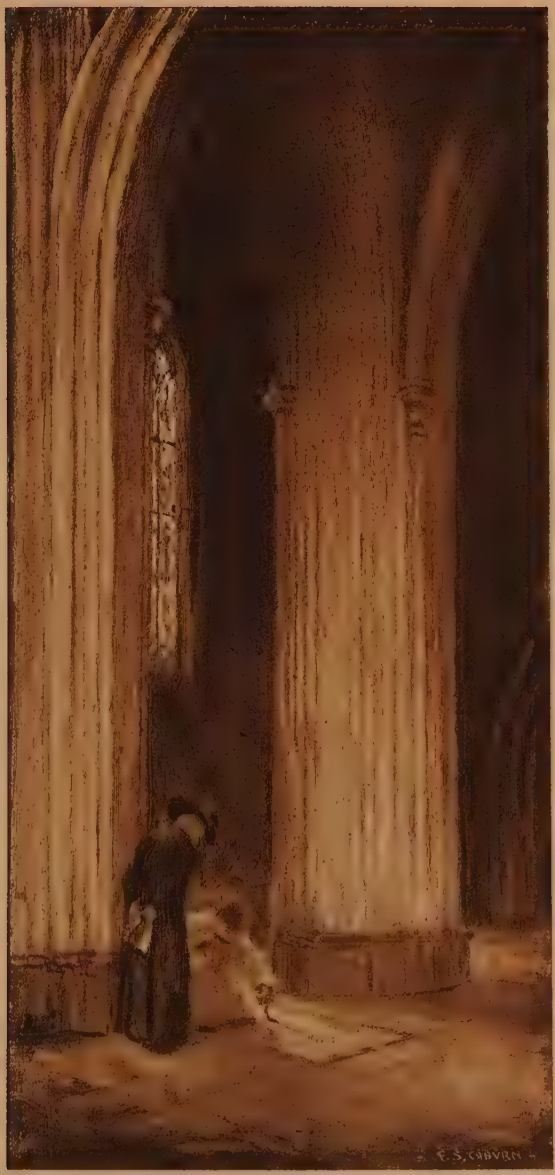
I thought,—All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the
hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me;
here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever
paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought
had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.

There's many a crown for who
can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the
Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

"They scratch his name on the Abbey stones,
My riding is better, by their leave."


F. S. CHURCH

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you
tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side
by side.

'T is something, nay 't is much: but
then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time
—Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a
rhyme?
Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?

"And that's your Venus?"

F.S.COBB

What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions
end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us?
Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with,
dim-descried.

"To yonder girl that fords the burn!"

F. S. COBURN '05

This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so
long!
What if heaven be that, fair and
strong
At life's best, with our eyes
upturned
Whither life's flower is first discern-ed,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?

"What if we still ride on we ride
Ride, ride together, forever ride?"

"What if we still ride on, we two × × × × × × ×
Ride, ride together, forever ride?"

A. S. COBURN - 05

What if we still ride on, we two
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in
degree,
The instant made eternity,——
And heaven just prove that
I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

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